

THE SPECIAL EDGE

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PARTNERSHIPS FOR A
UNIFIED SYSTEM OF EDUCATION:
POSITIVE EFFECTS FOR STUDENTS

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Five Goals That Guide the Special Education Division of the California Department of Education

- All individuals' unique instructional needs will be accurately identified.
- All individuals with disabilities will be served or taught by fully qualified personnel.
- All individuals with disabilities will be successfully integrated with their non-disabled peers throughout their educational experience.
- All individuals with disabilities will meet high standards for academic and non-academic skills.
- All individuals with disabilities will successfully participate in preparation for the workplace and independent living.

Focused Monitoring: *A Closer Look*

The path to change is rarely easy or painless, but several brave superintendents have embraced the challenging road of Focused Monitoring in an effort to change the way they work with the professionals, students, and parents in their districts, all with an end to improving education for the children of California.

Focused Monitoring is part of the Quality Assurance Process (QAP), an effort to join accountability with high standards for all students. This process comprises a three-year, data-informed system of review that evaluates a district's performance and outcomes based on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that support the goals of the Special Education Division (SED) of the California Department of Education (CDE, see sidebar). These data-informed results indicate a district's measure of success and determine the

degree to which the state then supports and guides the district's efforts to improve its educational outcomes.

As the system is currently designed, there are four levels of review, all informed by data that districts submit to the CDE. Those districts that present lower data scores and show themselves more in need of support for improvement, Facilitated Districts, undergo a three-year period of review.

During this first year, a number of volunteering districts are undergoing analysis, subsequent planning, and training, including a Leadership Seminar that took place earlier this school year. A representative team from each district is analyzing and monitoring its district's efforts and developing a plan to effect district-wide improvement, all with facilitation and support from CDE/SED staff and outside consultants.

Several administrators from Facilitated Review districts agreed to talk about their initial experiences as they help the CDE refine this dramatic change in its monitoring efforts. Those interviewed seemed to be in no way blind-sided by their KPI scores, nor were they unfamiliar with high standards and dedication to change.

In only his second year as superintendent in the Palo Verde Unified School District, Dr. Jock Fischer viewed participation in the Facilitated Review process as a chance to support efforts that were already underway in his district. He and representatives from his district had emerged from a Community Conference Meeting on March 27, 1999, with an articulated theme and commitment: "Improving Learning Together," and "together" for them meant all staff and all students, general and special education alike.

Brawley High School Unified School District had been in the process of restructuring its special education programs before it volunteered to participate in Focused Monitoring. The district had already committed to breaking down barriers between special education and general education and to helping all students succeed. Mr. Garth Isom, Superintendent for Brawley USD, believes that the segregation of special education students in the district was unfortunate and unnecessary, and was eager to find ways to foster more inclusive practices.

Mr. Edward Agundez notes that, in his nearly three-year tenure as Greenfield Unified School District's superintendent, he had clearly formulated his own particular concerns about the number of students who were identified as requiring special education services. This concern generated his interest in helping to build a system that provided as many supports as possible to enable students to remain and succeed in general education classrooms. He candidly cites, however, the tenacity of the CDE consultants, along with a strong recommendation from

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Informing and supporting parents, educators, and other service providers on special education topics, with a focus on research-based practices, legislation, technical support, and current resources



LETTER FROM THE STATE DIRECTOR



Dr. Alice Parker, Director of the Special Education Division of the California Department of Education

BY DR. ALICE PARKER

At the Special Education Division (SED) of the California Department of Education, we are currently working to improve the ways that special education services are monitored and supervised throughout the state. This Quality Assurance Process (QAP), as it is being revised and implemented, is in transition, but even in this year of revision, our goals for it are ambitious:

- We seek to ensure compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 (IDEA).
- We are determined to base evaluations on the performance of school districts, not solely on the programs they have in place.
- We are looking for results that reflect positive outcomes for children with disabilities.
- We are working to establish a system that is informed by data and developed with the input of a broad base of stakeholders.

We believe passionately that every state education agency has a responsibility under IDEA '97 to ensure that all children with disabilities are provided a free, appropriate public education. Additionally, the specialized instruction and related services available must ensure that students with disabilities are provided a public education that is comparable in opportunity, scope, and duration to the education provided students without disabilities.

The overall monitoring system to ensure these goals, the QAP, presents a four-pronged, balanced approach:

- A review of Local Plans.
- Complaints investigation and complaint management activities.
- Coordinated Compliance Review activities that include a comprehensive self-review by approximately 250 districts each year.
- Focused Monitoring activities that include four SED-conducted and supervised types of data-informed reviews that help determine the degree of a district's effectiveness: Verification Review, Collaboration Review, Facilitated Review, and Preferred Practices Review (see front page story, *The Special Edge*, Winter, 1999).

Together, these four components serve to provide comprehensive and timely action to sustain compliance and to proactively identify and remedy noncompliance.

This effort reflects a huge undertaking, given California's profile as a state with more than 1,100 school districts and counties or state-operated programs; with a monitoring system based primarily on procedural compliance, not on results; and with no data with which to respond when the new governor and Legislature asked, "How effective is special education in California?"

Also significant and daunting is the fact that available data has often been of little value, frequently inaccurate, rarely shared with stakeholders in districts or statewide, and not related to critical issues such as achievement and integration of students with disabilities into classrooms with their non-disabled peers.

Still, we are confident that we are currently developing a dynamic, flexible system that is moving to improve results for ALL students. And while the QAP process is in a transition year of implementation now, it has within itself planned stages of refinement and revisions for the future. We look forward to learning from each other—districts, states, parents, everyone involved—as we implement efforts toward change.

Granted, our goals are ambitious (see front page sidebar) as we seek to support and guide our districts into becoming the best that they can be. However, everything we are doing comes out of a conviction that California's students deserve nothing less.

Greenfield's director of special education, as additional key reasons he accepted the Focused Monitoring challenge from the CDE/SED.

Many of the goals of the Focused Monitoring efforts dovetail perfectly with the goals of these and other Facilitated Districts. So when the superintendents heard of the opportunity to receive additional support for their efforts—training, technical assistance, and additional funding—they eagerly pursued the prospect, seeing it as perfectly fitting the needs of their districts.

Dr. Fischer identifies the Focused Monitoring Leadership Seminar, sponsored by the CDE, as a potent source of support for the systems change to which his district was already committed. He praised the Seminar experience for providing his district's team with the vocabulary it needed to talk about what they wanted to accomplish. It gave them a much-needed opportunity to step back and "look at change across the district. . . at the bigger student picture." He felt that his team left the Seminar with a comprehensive overview of the challenges they face and the successes upon which they can build. He noted that the event also gave his group an opportunity to talk about their core beliefs, the needs of students, and their feelings and attitudes about each other and about system-wide change. From there, they were able to establish a common ground to which they could all commit and from which they could move forward to make real their dreams about a unified system of education that serves the needs of all students. He commended the content and organization of the Seminar for providing his district with "a richness of information not available before." He recognized that so much of the information that is essential to change was "locked up in people's hearts and minds," and the Seminar provided him with the key. He and his team left the experience invigorated as they came to realize that they all ultimately felt the same way about their students, their efforts, and their goals.

Mr. Isom's immediate response to the Focused Monitoring Leadership Seminar was one word: "Wonderful." Ironically, this single word as much reflects Mr. Isom's own unpretentious approach to the challenges of the Seminar as it suggests the quality of the Seminar itself. He observed

that, even after having worked for eight years with the regular and special educators who made up the Brawley team, the group struggled during the early sessions of the Seminar to be candid about their feelings and experiences. He realized, as he never had before, that he "represented. . . a wall" to their ability to do just that. As a result, he offered to leave so that his team could start making progress toward their plans for the district. Mr. Isom gives a great deal of credit to Steve Zuieback, facilitator at the Seminar, for providing a safe forum for this tension to emerge and be creatively resolved. Mr. Isom did remain at the Seminar and was delighted at the results. Reflecting on the fact that "the higher up we get, the more idealized a picture we get" and the less completely candid people feel they can be, he spoke with enthusiasm about the results of the Seminar, which helped him and his team realize the importance of the need to reevaluate priorities. The district team from Brawley emerged from the experience reaffirmed in their belief in the importance of communication and equipped with a shared set of attitudes and values to support them in living out that commitment in the classrooms and hallways of the district's schools.

Similarly, Mr. Agundez notes that he and his team left the Leadership Seminar with something more important than a new flow-chart or organizational plan: they left with a renewed sense of their goals, their commitment to each other, and a shared belief in the importance of mutual support and communication. Coming from an agricultural background, Mr. Agundez believes in the importance of paying attention to these more intangible components of an organization, components that constitute its vital "root system." The Seminar renewed the Greenfield team's conviction that, as these "below-the-ground" developments grow in health and vigor, the rest of the system will reflect that health and bear fruit in the methods it uses to educate its children.

The fruits of the initial Facilitated Reviews are promising. Since their Seminar in January, the Palo Verde team has already had two meetings, is eagerly planning its second annual Community Conference, and is working with the community to conduct a district-wide survey of staff, parents, and students. According to Dr. Fischer, this has initiated conversations among individuals who had never had the opportunity, the support, or the incentive

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students.***

to speak together before. Representatives from civic, church, migrant, parent, and professional groups have all begun talking in an effort to create a survey that will provide the district with a clear sense of what its constituency most wants from its schools, what it perceives it is currently receiving, and what constitutes its strengths and weaknesses.

The team from Brawley Unified has moved into their next stage of Focused Monitoring with a greater commitment to unifying general and special education. Since their Seminar last fall, the Brawley School Leadership Team has become more balanced in its representation, with members from both general and special education, and the district is currently working on adding special education student representatives as well. Additionally, curriculum teams in math, English, and science now contain staff from special education, along with the participants from general education. Overall, their early forays into the Focused Monitoring process have left Brawley Unified more aware of the need to model what they want their students to do: communicate, synthesize, and collaborate.

Improved communications are also apparent at Greenfield USD. Teachers are researching model sites, struggling to learn more about programs in comparable settings and with similar demographics, and finding ways to share information among their peers. Other results of the January Seminar involve a concerted effort on the part of the district to communicate more aggressively to the community critical information about school finances and development projects. A new, district-wide newsletter and contacts with the local

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Partnership Committee on Special Education (PCSE)

A Model of Collaboration



BY MADELON CLOUD

With the 1997 Reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA '97), the California Department of Education (CDE) prepared to write a State Improvement Grant (SIG) in order to receive funding to improve outcomes for individuals with disabilities. Because of the requirements related to plans to implement IDEA '97, Dr. Alice Parker, then newly appointed Director of the Special Education Division (SED) of the CDE, saw a unique opportunity to open up the planning process to the entire state and develop a highly representative and inclusive group called the Partnership Committee on Special Education (PCSE). The Partnership Committee's mission was to create a foundation for the SIG, make recommendations for implementing SIG activities, and evaluate the progress of that effort.

The PCSE consisted of representatives of over 100 agencies, organizations, colleges and universities, and other stakeholder groups. Especially important to this collaborative process was the inclusion of parent organizations and networks. These were seen as vital voices essential to the Partnership Committee.

The planning process used by the PCSE in the development of the SIG represented an unprecedented effort to inquire comprehensively into the effectiveness of the state's systems of early intervention, special education, and general education in meeting the needs of individuals with disabilities. Once gathered, that information would guide the development of a five-year plan that would effect needed change in this system. This unique approach is indicative of California's sincere intent to use the SIG as an instrument of systemic change, beginning with the construction of the plan itself.

To organize its approach in the effort, the CDE decided to use the "required elements of an effective educational system now and in the future," found in IDEA amendment Part D, subpart I, section 651 (a)(6), as the structural elements around which it organized the strategic plan. These elements consist of high academic standards; service integration and coordination; transition standards; consumer and parent involvement; disciplinary

strategies; research-based strategies; educational reform coordination; results; the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD); and funding.

The CDE determined to focus on the first eight elements. Funding was addressed through a separate, coordinated process mandated by the legislature. Because personnel development was considered essential to each of the other elements, the CSPD was automatically incorporated into them. This allowed the focus group for each element to independently consider the specific professional development necessary to bring its plans to fruition.

The PCSE launched into an ambitious eighteen months of hard work. It reviewed existing data and literature; collected input from statewide professionals, parents, and other stakeholders; met to develop a vision statement, determine needs, and define goals; worked together as Action Planning Teams to create and develop specific objectives for each goal; placed objectives on the Website in an effort to solicit additional input; met again to revise objectives; and again made those modified objectives available on the Web for outside response. The Action Teams then reconvened to work toward final refinements in the objectives, all of which have been incorporated as "activities" in the SIG.

Through this remarkable, collaborative effort, the PCSE members created an ambitious, laudable vision for the state's special education system, a vision with specific, measurable components. By the year 2003, the California Special Education system intends to realize the following:

- Students, families, and caregivers will be active partners with schools and communities to support the learning process.
- Students will demonstrate individualized, measurable growth based on standards leading to the highest possible level of education, independence, employment, and quality of life.
- All students will receive services from fully qualified, culturally competent personnel who use best practices in their teaching.
- Collaboration among education, health, and human services will ensure that the needs of students are met.

Also, the state's Special Education system will assure that four things exist at all levels: a comprehensive system of training and staff/personnel development; adequate resources; proactive, visionary leaders; and appropriate evaluation and accountability.

In forming such a collaborative partnership, California has established a model for truly effective, broad-based systemic improvement of an extraordinarily complicated system. This model features critical factors for successful systemic change: a data-based decision-making process; involvement of key stakeholders from the inception; conscious development of consumer and partner relationships; and a vision-driven process, with the active participation of all partners.

The leadership and vision of the PCSE is essential to successful development, implementation, and evaluation of SIG activities. The PCSE continues this work through annual meetings, when its members evaluate the progress of the grant, provide guidance on critical issues, and articulate the goals and objectives that constitute the agenda for the coming year. Since it was created as a collaborative body, the PCSE will continue its mission in this coordinated fashion, which has been a significant component of its success.

Of course, the fulfillment of the PCSE's broadest vision lies in higher expectations and increased achievement for individuals with disabilities; appropriate pre-service preparation resulting in greater numbers of qualified teachers; in-service, professional development and ongoing support for teachers and other personnel; and actual (as opposed to nominal) partnerships between parents, agencies, and organizations that serve the same population.

Despite cultural and political differences, competing interests, and preconceptions held on various fronts, the PCSE models a collaborative effort that will support and improve education in California, not only for those with disabilities, but for all students throughout the state.

For more information on the Partnership Committee on Special Education, contact CDE consultant Janet Canning at 916/327-4217; or e-mail her at <jcanning@cde.ca.gov>.

Regional Coordinating Councils (RCCs)

Questions and Answers



What are RCCs?

Regional Coordinating Councils (RCCs) are groups of parent leaders, school administrators, and professional development experts, who together represent pre-service and in-service efforts to improve teacher training programs and educational programs for students ages 0–22 years.

What is their goal?

The primary goal of the RCCs is to ensure that parents and personnel (teachers, parents, paraprofessionals, and administrators) in the public schools are well trained, informed, and fully qualified to educate and support all students.

Why are they important?

RCCs are currently implementing some of the training and technical assistance (TA) activities funded by the State Improvement Grant (SIG). The goal of the grant is to improve special education in California and to support the implementation of a unified system of education that will result in improved outcomes for all children.

What changes are they considering?

- The RCCs are considering ways they might influence the trainings for all staff in the public schools. They have three goals in this effort: to help all staff to become more fully qualified in supporting a broader range of students; to ensure that each staff member receives the support necessary to serve all students; and to build a unified system of education throughout the state.
- Additionally, the RCCs are geographically realigning the areas they represent to better match their general education counterparts. This will make it easier to coordinate the training and technical assistance efforts between general and special education.
- Finally, the RCCs are being asked to work collaboratively with parents and general educators so that together they may effectively, concertedly, and over time make the core curriculum available to all students.

How can RCCs benefit parents?

The RCCs are working hard to coordinate the efforts of general and special education to provide quality education for all students. If they are successful, then every child in the public schools—every child in regular education, as well as every child in special education—will benefit. Each will have more opportunities to learn, will receive the finest instruction, and will be offered the opportunity to achieve higher standards and improved outcomes.

How can RCCs benefit teachers?

Federal and state legislation and initiatives are increasingly holding schools and teachers accountable for the level of achievement of all students. RCCs have the capacity to influence the professional development of school staffs and, as a result, make increased collaboration possible, supporting a unified system of education and promoting high standards and achievement for all.

Why request TA?

While every situation and each school is unique, technical assistance is often needed in order to accomplish the following:

- Help develop programs and services that will improve academic achievement for all students.
- Implement research-based practices in literacy and behavior, practices that are designed to ensure school-wide success.
- Help build effective relationships among students, their families, and the school community.
- Implement early intervention programs designed to reduce the need for costly special education services and, by doing so, reduce program cost over time.

Who can request TA?

In order to make the most efficient use of the resources available, TA requests need to come from the following:

- Special Education Administrators
- District Superintendents and Site Administrators
- Personnel Development Teams

How can my organization access TA?

If your school or district is in need of technical assistance, call CalSTAT at 707/ 206-0533. You will be connected with the person in your region who can discuss your technical assistance needs.

What is the big picture?

The goals of a larger effort involving the RCCs, CalSTAT, and the State Improvement Grant (see article, page four) are four-fold: to assist agencies in the development of their programs and educational structures to ensure school success for all students; to make available to students the tools for success in school and reduce the frustration and failure for them and for their families; to make available to teachers training and program support that will enhance their ability to provide the finest education possible; and to reduce the fiscal impact of costly, long-term special education services by coordinating and implementing intensive, short-term intervention programs.

What is *Technical Assistance*?

The Random House College Dictionary defines *technical* as “peculiar to or characteristic of a particular art, science, profession, trade, etc.” Any expert help or assistance provided to a profession, such as education, can be appropriately labeled “technical assistance.”

For educators, technical assistance most commonly consists of a system of supports to schools, districts, and RCCs. These supports, as CalSTAT is offering them, are designed to help improve educational opportunities for children with disabilities. They can take a variety of forms: program assessment and recommendations; small and large group training on models of best practices; referrals to other resources or programs; individual consultation on site, by e-mail, or by phone; and any combination of these.

Collaborative Efforts: *Taking the Challenge*



The Schwab Foundation for Learning is pleased to announce the 2000–2001 General Education/Special Education Collaborative

Challenge. The Foundation is working on this effort in partnership with the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) and the CalSTAT Project (California Services for Technical Assistance and Training), a technical assistance contractor with the Special Education Division of the California Department of Education. The purpose of the challenge is to identify and share the work of successful and innovative collaborations between general educators and special educators in California's public schools, collaborations that serve the needs of students with disabilities and support their success in the general classroom setting (see profiles of the 1999–2000 winners, pages seven through ten). Once the Collaborative Challenge identifies the four model projects, it will provide them with resources (training, travel, substitute teachers, etc.) so they can share their work with others and continue the success of their project.

The benefits to the Collaborative Challenge awardees are many: a \$10,000 cash grant for professional development to build on the work of the model project; press coverage in leading publications, including *Ed Cal* and *The Special EDge*; support for presentations made at regional and state conferences; ongoing opportunities to network and share information with other successful sites; and support for model site teams to participate in a leadership institute on collaboration. Additionally, through the indication of their endorsement of collaboration, all applicants will receive professional feedback and priority technical assistance (TA) support, if requested.

The Collaborative Challenge evolved out of a shared interest in recognizing and disseminating the success of schools and districts that align general educators and special educators in a systematic, coordinated effort that produces positive outcomes for all students. Its goal is to highlight schools and districts that have committed to building systems that provide opportunities and incentives for collaboration.

A variety of privileges and obligations accompany the award. Representatives from

“Our goal is to find schools and districts that have made a commitment to building a system that provides opportunities and incentives for collaboration.”

— *Scott Flemming*
Program Manager in Education,
The Schwab Foundation

model sites will be required to present their program's success at trainings, conferences, or other selected, information-sharing venues. Each model project must select a representative Site Team that includes four people: ideally, a general educator, a special educator, an administrator, and a parent or other critical stakeholder. These team members must also commit to participating in a three-day Leadership Institute on collaboration (see article, page 11); three workshop/conference presentations between June 2000 and June 2001; and interviews with ACSA and *The Special EDge* publications staffs, as well as with other media representatives. All travel expenses incurred by Site Team members in Collaborative Challenge-related activities, including substitute teachers' salaries requisitioned for release time, will be paid by the Schwab Foundation.

A selection committee, made up of representatives from each of the sponsoring organizations, will select the semifinalists after reviewing applications. The committee will then contact each semifinal site representative and schedule a site visit and team interview with a representative from the Collaborative Challenge Selection Committee. These visits will take place between May 18 and May 25, 2000.

The selection committee will choose

four Model Projects from the slate of semifinalists. Those semifinalists not among the four will be designated as Collaborative Challenge Mentor Sites and supported to attend the Leadership Institute on collaboration. Model Projects and Mentor Sites will be notified by phone of the final selections in early June.

The kinds of collaborations that most interest the Selection Committee are those that produce positive outcomes for students with disabilities in the general classroom setting. These projects may include research-validated methods and “promising practices.” The Committee is open to both. It is particularly interested in the data that a project has collected to show success for students with learning disabilities, the process used to collect the data, and the trends in the data over time, not simply raw results. Positive outcomes for individuals other than those with learning disabilities (e.g., other students, educators, parents, community members, or paraprofessionals) constitute an additional plus for a site.

To be considered a model project, a district or site must meet each of the following eligibility requirements:

- Be a California public school or district.
- Have had its collaboration in place for two years prior to the 1999–2000 school year.
- Have the support of a local ACSA member who will endorse the work of the applicant's collaboration.*
- Be either a school-based or district-wide project.
- Serve any combination of pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade.
- Be in compliance with California Special Education regulations.

For more information,
Phone: 707/ 206-0533, ext. 110
E-mail: allison.smith@calstat.org
Write: Collaborative Challenge
Selection Committee
CalSTAT/ CIHS
Sonoma State University
1801 East Cotati Avenue
Rohnert Park, CA 94928

* District superintendents are likely to be ACSA members. Dennis Meyers at 800/ 890-0325 will help identify ACSA members in your area.

Profiles: Collaborative Challenge Winners

Three California schools and one school district have been recognized for outstanding collaborations between general and special education. The collaborations are geared toward helping students with learning disabilities find success in the general classroom setting; they are profiled in pages seven through ten of this issue.

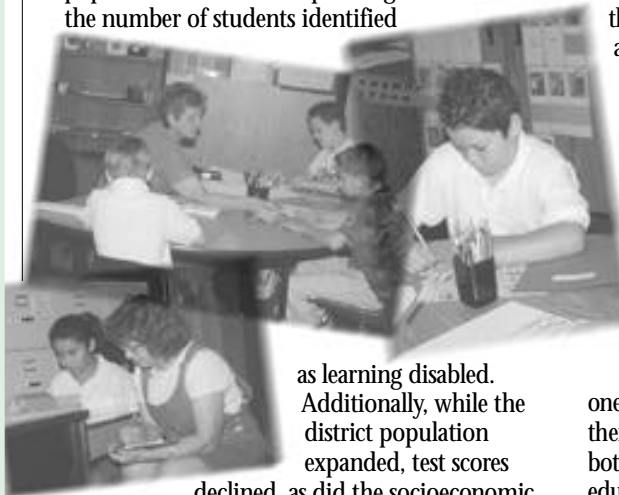
The district and schools were recognized under a new program—The Collaborative Challenge—formed out of a partnership among the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA), the Schwab Foundation for Learning, and California Services for Technical Assistance and Training (CalSTAT). The four recipients have served as model projects, sending representatives around the state to present their programs to educators at professional development events. To facilitate the continued success of the model projects, each has received a \$10,000 grant from the Schwab Foundation, to be used for teacher and professional development.

"These model projects are powerful examples of the efficacy of...[the] collaboration [between special and general education], and we believe they can and should be replicated in other schools and districts," said Scott Flemming, Program Manager in Education for the Schwab Foundation.

What follows are brief overviews of the four award-winning programs for 1999–2000. If a school district or site is interested in learning more about these model projects, please call CalSTAT at 707/ 206-0533, ext. 110. Page six of this publication provides information about applying for the Collaborative Challenge Grant for any site or district that would like to share its program with the rest of the state.

Elk Grove: Neverstreaming

Elk Grove Unified School District in Sacramento County serves the educational needs of almost 42,000, K-12 students. The district's collaborative program, Neverstreaming, started because the district was forced to face the realities of a mushrooming population, with a corresponding increase in the number of students identified



as learning disabled. Additionally, while the district population expanded, test scores declined, as did the socioeconomic status of the students. At some of the schools, the student support systems were cracking under the strain.

In response, the district gathered a group of ninety professionals, who met for more than two years in their effort to develop the Neverstreaming program, which holds at its core early intervention for students with potential learning disabilities. As Martin Cavanaugh, Assistant Superintendent, Student Services, explained, "The concept is really designed for frontloading preventive services [before significant failure occurs]." Neverstreaming, as the name implies, means never allowing a child to leave the advantage of the mainstream, the general education classroom, in the first place. It provides preventive services as soon as a child needs them, so that the child never falls so far behind that catching up becomes impossible.

One of the keys to the success of Elk Grove's program is the Cooperative Conference, which regularly brings together general and special education staff to meet and discuss the needs of both general and special education students. The staff then determines the appropriate interventions and supports that will allow all students to succeed. This process has yielded improved school-wide academic performance, student progress toward standards and goals, and a heightened sense of staff collaboration that benefits all.

"Neverstreaming addresses the epidemic proportion of youngsters identified as learning disabled," according to Cavanaugh. "The learning disability category has no neuro-

physiological identification construct to make. . . [these children] eligible. What it does is simply compare their academic performance to their IQ or some cognitive measure. If there is a lag. . . [between] academic performance. . . [and] cognitive potential. . . that reaches a certain mathematically computed point differential, then that child becomes eligible for special ed as a learning disabled student. Kids would. . . [be required] to demonstrate failure into first, second, third, fourth grade before there would be a significant enough gap between their cognitive potential and their achievement level. So, in a sense, the child. . . [must] continue to fail in order to reach special ed eligibility. We were philosophically completely opposed to that. And that was really the spark that ignited the desire to make something different."

Special education students are not the only ones that Neverstreaming benefits. "I think there are huge implications that are positive for both the learning disability and the general education groups," Cavanaugh averred. "First and foremost is that [Neverstreaming uses] diagnostic and prescriptive teaching methods [for] students who may be encountering difficulties with reading. There are many youngsters [with] reading difficulties who benefit from this intervention, not just. . . special ed students."

Another key benefit that Cavanaugh cited was the relationships that Neverstreaming encourages among teachers with different backgrounds. Both general and special education teachers learn from each other's strengths.

Additionally, "the accent isn't on which compartment the child fits into," he continued. It's "on what the child needs to be successful. We cut down on the huge amount of time taken in assessments, referrals, paperwork, meetings, and planning that goes behind the mandates of special education. The teachers are freed up to provide more time. . . [for direct] instruction. Those are the key. . . benefits."

Elk Grove Unified School District is proving that collaboration between general education and special education can be successful district wide. This success was acknowledged in 1997, when the California School Boards Association awarded the Golden Bell Award to Elk Grove for their Neverstreaming program. The additional recognition Elk Grove is receiving through the Collaborative Challenge grant has already gone far in helping to spread the word about the successes the district is experiencing in its vigorous efforts to achieve success for its students through collaboration.

Richmond: *Collaboration Is Elementary*

Richmond Elementary School in Sierra Sands Unified School District was the smallest site chosen by the Collaborative Challenge as a model project. Serving 447 students from grades kindergarten through five, including 86 special education students, Richmond's program fully includes special education students in general education classes, with the exception of language arts and mathematics.

Bev Estis, principal of Richmond Elementary, reports that the program has been growing from year to year. "When I first started at Richmond—and I've been here fifteen years—the general ed teachers pulled me aside and [said], 'We want to have our own faculty meeting and, by the way, do we have to take *those* kids?' Then the special ed teachers pulled me aside and told me, 'We want our own faculty meeting and, by the way, can you make them take our kids?' So I got the idea that this was something we were going to need to focus on. In fact, when the superintendent sent me here, he told me he wanted me to make this 'one' school. That was my goal."

Little by little, under Estis's leadership, the collaborative model is coming together. It began with teachers tentatively agreeing to try new approaches, and has extended to their taking an active part in directing the collaboration.

Richmond gives students instruction from both general and special education teachers in the same classroom, and attempts to keep the classes together as much as possible. "The focus of our program is to make sure the assistance is provided within the classroom and as part of the core curriculum," Estis added. "Except for language arts and math, the general and special ed students are instructed as a group."

One of the unique aspects of Richmond's collaborative project is a reading program called the Dragon Reading Club. Here, general and special education students tutor others. "This is one of the best parts, because if kids are in special ed, they've generally never . . . [participated as] helpers; they've always been . . . [on the receiving end]," Estis emphasized. "When



we . . . [host] our Dragon Reading Club with cross-age tutoring, we do have kids who are learning handicapped—we've even had kids who are severely handicapped. . . [perhaps] reading at a third- or fourth-grade level—helping second graders [who are]. . . reading at a kindergarten or first-grade level."

Estis observed that one of the factors contributing to the success of Richmond's program has been the planned collaboration time that allows teachers to work together and schedule classes. "Before, we had some collaboration time in our schedules, but it wasn't enough. Now, with this grant, we are able to . . . [conduct] collaboration days every other Friday."

This scheduled time allows teachers to share important information they might not otherwise have time either to discover or use.

According to Estis, they discuss "how to modify instruction, how to make sure we're using differentiated instruction for all of our

kids. That's so valuable. We look at our kids and ask ourselves how [they are] doing in our classroom today and what can we do tomorrow to help them do better."

Estis is confident that grouping the general and special education students benefits both groups, particularly in enabling them to get along with each other. "Our kids get what I call a slice of real life. Most people, when they come across individuals with disabilities, don't want to be rude. They want to do the right thing. A lot of times, people feel self-conscious because they are not sure what is the right way to approach someone. What our kids learn is that people are people. It sounds so simplistic, but it is so true. They learn that this student in the wheelchair can be funny sometimes, he can be annoying sometimes, he can be a good friend, and he can be a pain. He's just like everyone else in many ways."

More in Common Than You'd Think

By COLLEEN SHEA STUMP, INTERIM CHAIR
DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION, SAN FRANCISCO STATE UNIVERSITY

The Collaborative Challenge winners for 1999–2000 are an extremely varied group of projects ranging from a small elementary school of fewer than 500 students to one of the fastest-growing districts in the nation, serving thousands of students. Despite the obvious differences, all of the Collaborative Challenge schools share an amazing number of common, underlying elements that are typical of other successful efforts in education.

Allocation of time—Including students with disabilities in general education classrooms is not an easy task. It requires changing existing structures and practices. Successful schools and districts make time available for learning, commitment, and trust to develop. This allows meaningful change to occur and collaborative efforts to take hold, reaping benefits for students and faculty. Time spent in the effort makes enduring change possible.

Administrative support—Administrators at successful sites are instructional leaders who support innovation and provide the resources necessary to turn those innovations into lasting reality.

Ongoing professional development—Successful sites provide ongoing professional development that incorporates research-based practices, as well as personal and group assessment. This effort also equips teachers with the depth they need to incorporate and sustain change.

Teaming—Easing and erasing boundaries between general and special education and other service providers is critical to the success of any collaborative effort. The commitment to share expertise across specialties—general education, special education, bilingual education, migrant education, English language development, Title I programs—only energizes sites, linking available resources in new and innovative ways.

Mariposa: *From Kindergarten to College*

At Mariposa Elementary, in the Brea-Olinda Unified School District, every Special Day Class (SDC) and Resource Specialist student is assigned to a general education classroom. A school of more than six hundred K-6 students, Mariposa has formed a unique partnership with California State University, Fullerton, to help in the effort.

"When I first came to Mariposa, special ed had a different twist to it," commented SDC teacher Sharon Eggleton. "It was mostly pullout programs. We weren't able to offer services to our kids the way we wanted."

Mariposa's special educators then found Professor Belinda Karge at CSU, Fullerton, and began a relationship that has benefited both the elementary school and the university. The first step involved training Mariposa's staff in collaboration strategies. The training began on a small scale, moved to co-teaching, and soon started successfully including special education students in general classrooms. They also found that they could help all students who were at risk and provide more services for everyone.

The connection between Mariposa and CSUF includes a plan for the university to use Mariposa as a hands-on training ground for its student teachers, who get direct experience in everything from assessing individual students to creating lesson plans.

Eggleton feels one of the keys to success was the receptivity of Mariposa's teachers to this new collaboration. "The teachers were open and flexible," she noted. "They wanted to try new things." CSUF's Karge

agreed: "Over the last four years, the teachers have embraced research-based, effective teaching strategies and have learned the components of co-teaching," she related. "They individualize instruction for all students at the school site. Every child receives pre- and post-testing, and running records are kept very current. Teachers . . . [regularly] meet to discuss children's progress and to adapt and modify instruction, as needed, for all students at the site. Test scores have risen 15 percent since implementation of the co-teaching inclusion model."

One of the differences between Mariposa and the other Collaborative Challenge model projects has been the involvement of CSUF from the beginning. Karge indicated that Mariposa has advanced perceptibly, from special education classes in remote portables to its present Learning Center, serving all students at the school's hub. "Four years ago, I was asked to give an in-service on research-based, effective teaching strategies," Karge recalled. "At the time, the school had the highest

Mariposa continued, page 10



Communication and ongoing dialogue—Facing challenges, creating teams and plans, and incorporating changes require talk, talk, and more talk—at meetings, on the phone, in between classes, through e-mail, or by any other means available. Successful projects know that effective communication and continuous problem-solving are integral to their success.

Early intervention—Systematically identifying and addressing needs as soon as they appear is the cornerstone of good instruction. Teams at successful sites closely monitor the performance of all students, being vigilant for anyone who might be experiencing difficulty. At the first sign that a student is having a problem, program supports immediately kick in to assist teachers in meeting the needs of that student.

Data-informed decision-making—At successful sites, critical decisions around instructional strategies and curricula are not based on hunches or informal observation. All projects use informal and ongoing evaluations of student performance, as well as summary evaluations (e.g., the SAT 9) and program activities for making modifications and decisions around extra support.

All teachers accountable for all learners—Educational efforts work most effectively when every teacher is accountable for every student. The cultures at successful sites encourage an "our children" as opposed to "your children" approach to meeting the needs of all students. This position reflects the belief in a community of learners and a decreased emphasis on labeling and

providing services through categorically based programs. Instead of holding on to rigid markers, expertise across programs is pooled to create communities of learning that embrace the needs of all.

Intensive academic intervention—Model projects have all created unique structures that provide special education students with intensive, skill-based instruction, while at the same time engaging them in the general education core curriculum.

Core curriculum focus—The general education curriculum and its related standards are at the center of the educational program at successful sites. These sites have developed mechanisms for engaging and supporting students in the core curriculum, which is quite a feat given the current emphasis on standards and accountability as measured by student performance on standardized achievement tests.

Sustainability—Successful programs have continued to thrive, even when key leaders move on. This longevity is one of the principal hallmarks of meaningful change.

Although the literature around collaboration suggests many different models and approaches to successfully including students with learning disabilities in the general education classroom, this list of successful elements offers a structure of commonality that is inspiring.

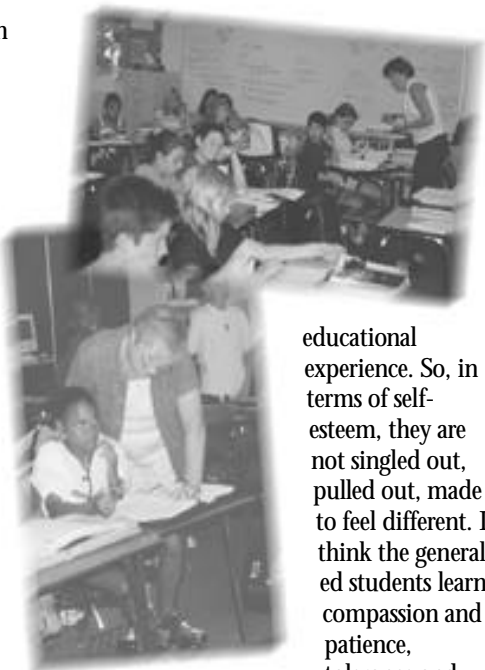
Iron Horse: A Multi-layered Approach

Iron Horse Middle School in the San Ramon Valley Unified School District, another Collaborative Challenge winner, serves a student population of close to 700, more than ten percent of whom had been identified as learning disabled. "What we've done is create a layered approach to services because we have students who [run] a spectrum of challenges," explained Iron Horse Resource Specialist, Linda Rowley. "We have kids who are out and about in the general education program all day long. They might only see us for thirty minutes a week for a check-in, just to . . . see how everything is going. These are kids who have met most of their local objectives over the years and are doing really well. [There are also] . . . students who fall somewhere in the middle, who [might] see us for direct service one period a day, or are in classes with support staff," Rowley continued. Within the general education classes, support staff work with general education teachers at each grade level in math and science. As a result, students receive all the help they need within the general education setting.

Those students for whom reading and writing is a serious challenge are given support through customized core classes in reading, language arts, and history. Since success in math and science also depends on a student's ability to read and write, Iron Horse makes sure that extra staff are present in those general classes as well, providing support and help to all students.

One of the key mandates behind the Iron Horse program, Rowley emphasized, is that all students, including those identified with special needs, be involved in the same curriculum. Adolescents have a strong desire to conform to their peers and to not stand out in any way. Iron Horse has managed to accommodate students by employing the same curriculum for everyone.

Kirby Hoy, the principal of Iron Horse, has been very pleased with the collaboration between his special and general educators. Hoy also noted emphatically that "the benefits of a program like this are not just for special ed kids, but for general ed kids as well. The special ed kids get the same



educational experience. So, in terms of self-esteem, they are not singled out, pulled out, made to feel different. I think the general ed students learn compassion and patience, tolerance and acceptance, as well as. . . [the ability to] focus on similarities and not on differences."

The Learning Center Collaborative Program at Iron Horse expands special education services by seamlessly weaving educational support throughout the curriculum. As an outgrowth of this,

Rowley outlined gains for general education students as well. "We were able to design programs to serve a variety of different students. We have a very active student support team on our campus that discusses students and student needs. We have no problem at the Learning Center [in] providing support services to kids who need them, regardless of whether or not they have an IEP [Individualized Education Program]. The goal is for each one of the 700 students on our campus to be successful. We, as special educators, are bound by the IEPs to serve a certain number of students, but we [actually] serve a lot more."

Iron Horse has experienced tremendous success in assisting learning-challenged students. As the program has developed, discipline referrals have dropped. Eighty-one percent of the school's students passed the district writing proficiency exam on the first try. Additionally, Rowley enthused, "It's such a wonderful thing that our students are on the honor roll. We have kids who have definite learning challenges, but they're still earning A's and B's in their classes because they're getting the support they need. They have the confidence. . . to succeed, and. . . willingness to try everything."

Mariposa . . . *continued from page 9*

referrals to special education and now they have the lowest in the district."

Sherrill Clevenger, Mariposa's new principal, views the link with CSUF as an important component in the school's program. "The collaboration with the university is just another part of the circle of providing the best we can for the students," she remarked. "Belinda Karge brings in her expertise, and her student teachers support the inclusion program. It's wonderful. I think this is how every university should be."

Everyone agrees that the Mariposa students are the ones who really benefit from the collaboration. "The students with special needs have a chance to be educated alongside their general education peers," Karge expanded. "They see good social role models and make friends with their peers. They are not left out.

Their academics have improved significantly. The strategies implemented help not only the special ed students but the general education students as well. The lower adult-to-student ratio is a win-win for everyone."

Principal Clevenger noted that "one of the benefits is that the kids are included and not pulled out. They blend in. . . I also see some of the teaching techniques of the special ed teachers rubbing off on the general education teachers. Our teachers are viewing this very positively. They recognize that they're providing the best support for the child." Clevenger added that feedback has been good. "Our special education parents have been very positive about their child's experience in the program," she concluded. "They're very happy they're being taught in the general education setting."

Cooperation between such historically isolated "fronts" has been "serendipitous," as Joan puts it. PTIs are attempting to alter that, aiming to increase parent participation on all levels. Among other efforts, they host family forums that couple new parent advocates with "veterans." With their ever-present bilingual staff, PTIs work hard to serve families from diverse cultural and economic communities, making funds available to prepare these families to take the lead as decision-makers within the educational system.

Matrix has been especially active in supporting culturally diverse families of children with special needs. Executive Director, Deirdre Hayden, relates the organization's involvement with Marin County's Hispanic parents. Matrix staff have given families hope by sharing success stories with them and enabling them to meet other families with similar challenges. Bringing together the worlds of general and special education is also a goal at Matrix. Early February saw their annual fundraiser honoring four students who bridge the gap between children with and without disabilities.

Exceptional Parents Unlimited (EPU), a PTI in Fresno, California, operates programs targeting children both with and without disabilities. These programs involve early intervention, parent-to-parent support, medical staff education, and parenting skills for families with histories of abuse. According to Kay Spencer, Parent Trainer, the goal "to empower families to be all they can be" links each of EPU's programs. To accommodate the region's multi-cultural needs, all programs are offered in Spanish, and many include Southeast Asian residents as well.

Marta Anchondo, Deputy Director of Team of Advocates for Special Kids (TASK), a PTI in Anaheim, California, is a fifteen-year veteran of making partnerships work. Originally a TASK volunteer who wanted to "give back to the community," Marta offers a successful and highly pragmatic approach. When admiring parents commend TASK for its training techniques, Marta avows that much of it boils down to courtesy and flexibility. She has also discovered that homemade cookies go a long way toward sweetening tempers and soothing frustrations, as they can represent a desire to cooperate in the most volatile settings.

PTIs have been a great impetus and support in providing parents with invaluable tools for becoming effective advocates for their children. These groups have literally changed the world for children with disabilities and their families.

To find the California PTI that can best serve you, visit the following Website for a complete listing: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/spbranch/sed/ptirc.htm>; or call Procedural Safeguards and Referral Services at 800/ 926-0648.

Leadership Institutes

Building Capacity in the Field

"B

BY LINDA BLONG

uilding capacity" is the new organizational buzz phrase, used by groups as diverse as multinational pharmaceutical corporations, small church groups, and first world countries. Essentially, it means helping people in any organization or community develop the vision and skills necessary to recognize and achieve their goals and sustain their dreams. This spring, the California Department of Education is sponsoring three leadership institutes to build the capacity of the state's "Comprehensive System of Personnel Development" (CSPD). These CSPD Leadership Institutes will each address one of three of the most important issues facing educators today: behavior, literacy, and collaboration. All are presented with the goal of improving the way educators and parents are trained in California.

What is the purpose?

The institutes are designed to build capacity at the regional level so that participants will be better able to

- provide personnel development and family education in their regions;
- effect the State Improvement Grant goals;
- utilize effective adult learning strategies;
- support systems change and improve outcomes in our schools; and
- promote validated, research-based practices in education.

Who will attend these institutes?

Guided by the Regional Coordinating Council (see article, page five), each educational region will choose a specialized team to attend the Institutes. The team will be made up of two groups:

- A team of representatives from a selected school or district site that models successful practices in the Institute's main topic (behavior, literacy, or collaboration). These sites will become "Mentor Sites" to support the efforts of others at the Institute and afterward.

- An additional four to six individuals from the region who have expertise in education and personnel development related to the institute's topic.

How do they achieve their purpose?

- For each topic, the Institutes will emphasize significant "core messages" that are identified by experts in the field and that articulate critical research findings.
- Each Institute will provide on-line resources to support and enhance its primary topic. Institute participants will engage in Web-based conferences before, during, and after the Institute. These virtual conferences will allow individuals to focus on their specific areas of interest and develop relationships with peers across the state.
- Through the participation of Mentor Sites from each region, each conference will offer examples of real-world successes and challenges. Participants will explore ways to support and utilize Mentor Sites to train others.
- Institute participants will learn and practice facilitation and training skills. They will also share information about resources for implementing effective training in their regions.

How can trainers and educators learn more about participating?

Contact Allison Smith at CalSTAT (phone: 707/ 206-0533, ext. 110; e-mail: allison.smith@calstat.org). She will provide guidance for the application process and put trainers and educators in touch with their RCC representative.

Topics, Dates, and Locations

Behavior: Positive Behavior Supports for a Safe and Healthy Learning Environment, March 26-29, 2000, Monterey, CA.

Literacy: Special Education and the California Reading Initiative, May 8-10, 2000, San Diego, CA.

Collaboration: The Collaborative Challenge: Unifying General and Special Education,* June 19-22, 2000, Palm Springs, CA.

**Collaborative Challenge Institute sites are chosen through a Request for Proposal. (See article on page six for more information.)*

Spanning Regular and Special Education

The Atchisons Are Partners in Progress



BY CLAUDIA LOOMIS
WITH LES ATCHISON AND
KAY ATCHISON

he gap between the worlds of general and special education is closing. The reauthorization of IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) in 1997 heightened awareness of the needs of students with disabilities and has affected the way educators and others regard the educational requirements of all students throughout California. Additionally, it has required many educators and administrators across the country to reevaluate their own roles in leadership and service delivery. Although federal mandates call for across-the-board compliance with IDEA '97, some have moved from mere compliance to heartfelt commitment in assuring successful implementation of the intents of IDEA '97. Such commitment is evident in the work of Les and Kay Atchison, who model a partnership that joins general and special education forces.

Les is the Executive Director of the Capital Sierra School Leadership Center, the thirteen-county, Sacramento-area program for the California School Leadership Academy (CSLA). Established in 1985 with funding generated by Senate Bill 813, which proposed broad and diverse education reform, the CSLA was created to develop a comprehensive statewide delivery system of training programs for general education administrators. Programs consist of content and professional development for current and aspiring administrators. These programs typically span ten days per year for three-year periods, featuring an annual intensive two-day summer workshop.

A former middle-school principal for many years, Les affirms that "a principal has an incredible responsibility for the flow of events at [his/her] school," and must be accountable for "insuring a flexible enough program to meet special education needs." As a general education school administrator, Les recalls his active involvement in the IEP (Individualized Education Program) process, particularly where he saw in it the potential to be proactive rather than reactive, and to "make a difference" in the lives of his

students. He remembers a specific IEP meeting at which he was present, one that became, in his words, "pretty contentious." The process had been stalemated by the parent's demand for a very specific program she had targeted for her child, the implementation of which would have been problematic. Because school administrators are authorized to make programmatic changes, he was able to offer a modified program accommodating all concerned. After the meeting, the parent confessed, "If you had not been there, my next step would have been going to court." While Les admits that his wife Kay, SELPA (Special Education Local Plan Area) Director for Placer/Nevada Counties, has certainly enhanced his perception of special education issues, giving him an advantage other administrators may not enjoy, he does maintain that much of the resistance to IDEA '97 he encounters from administrators results from misinformation or lack of information, both in terms of IDEA's intent and the universal benefits to be gained by compliance.

Les and Kay collaborated on developing the focus of CSLA's 1999 summer academy, "Building Connections from the Heart—Connecting Special Education and General Education." The idea originated with IDEA's reauthorization, along with the Atchisons' concomitant desire to examine ways in which its legislative issues affect general education school administrators. Because Les clearly anticipated hard questions from administrators who honestly want to make IDEA '97 work, he invited presenters who could substantiate its effectiveness from a practical standpoint with credible case accounts. The 1999 program focused on legal ramifications of the new regulations under IDEA; student discipline, suspension, and expulsion; and developing "solution" teams for difficult IEP meetings. A solid success, the academy featured keynote speakers Alice Parker, Director of Special Education, California Department of Education, and Marion Joseph, Member of the California State Board of Education, as well as prominent attorney advocates and education facilitators statewide.

In addition to the basic CSLA modules,

Les offers ongoing advanced workshops that go beyond the basic three-year foundation, including an executive-level program for superintendents, district superintendents, and board members, to help them support good schools and to enable those that need improvement to get back on track. Les believes that only leadership that is collaborative "across the board" can send the message that will facilitate implementation of IDEA '97.

Kay concurs wholeheartedly with her husband on his approach to effectively implement IDEA '97 and target the spectrum of educational needs of all students. "Principals are the key," she avows. "They make it work on campus." As a SELPA director responsible for insuring access to all appropriate special education services within her jurisdiction, she is acutely aware of an administrator's power to either provide essential leadership or "drop the ball." She sees the success of IDEA resting ultimately in the hands of individual principals, since they are the ones who initiate, support, and facilitate the implementation of the Act.

However, she recognizes that even the best intentioned administrators can become overwhelmed by the real-world challenges found in compliance complications, staff opposition, and critical budget constraints. Special education, as it currently exists, is an expensive program laboring under enormous financial deficits, both on federal and state levels. "It is difficult," Kay admits, from the standpoint of a special education advocate, "to get general education colleagues on board with you." Teacher training is particularly costly, as is teacher release time for staff development. To that end, the SELPA in Placer/Nevada Counties has provided teacher-training programs, along with several others, including technical assistance programs and a three-year literacy program that includes principals as part of its task force.

Kay notes that SELPAs need to become more active in recognizing the role of principals and making them a part of the process. Her SELPA recently issued a

Spanning continued, page 13

M E D I C A L N E W S

By PATRICIA MICHAEL

Along with the amazing advances in medical technology in recent years, there has been a parallel increase in the number of students attending school with specialized, physical health care needs. As a result, school personnel face new challenges in providing health care services for these students. Students with chronic illnesses, students who need to receive medicines throughout the school day, and students who regularly require medical care—all test our current system of delivery of medical services in the public schools.

The Special Education Division (SED) of the California Department of Education (CDE) has been providing leadership to improve programs and services for all of its students, including students with special health care needs. This includes anyone who may require health services or some other form of related support services, program modifications, or technology to benefit from their educational experience. Those students with chronic illnesses (such as diabetes, asthma, leukemia, epilepsy, cancer, spina bifida, cerebral palsy, and others) and students with acute illnesses may qualify for specialized health care services. These services are prescribed by a physician, require medical training, and are necessary for the student to attend school. Health care procedures may then be assigned to school staff to administer under the training and supervision of a credentialed school nurse, public health nurse, or licensed physician. Some health care procedures may need a licensed professional to administer in school.

In order to effectively and safely meet the challenges incumbent in providing this care, schools must develop partnerships with parents and health care providers. These three groups working together for the best interest of the child are sure to create a program of safe and healthy medical accommodations in our schools.

A credentialed school nurse is the person qualified to initiate a health assessment of the student, identify health needs for school attendance, and develop a health care plan to accommodate these needs. However, parent input, participation, and agreement are critical to this process.

After an individualized school health care plan is formulated, it then needs to be presented to the IEP (Individualized

Education Program) team for further collaboration and approval. Once approved, the health care plan becomes a part of the IEP as a health care service.

Although the health care plan is not an educational mandate, it is a standard nursing practice and ensures the best possible health care in a learning environment for students.

Spanning... continued from page 12

newsletter commending administrators who provide leadership in special education at their respective schools. Along those lines, she encourages SELPA leaders to “get creative” in their thinking and operations. “Education today is change and reform,” Kay concludes. “We can’t continue to do the same old things and expect to achieve different results. All of us—especially administrators—need to be open to effective modification.” To promote real partnerships between general and special

The SED is revising and updating the CDE publication *Guidelines and Procedures for Meeting the Specialized Physical Health Care Needs of Pupils*, which was published to assist parents, school administrators, nurses, and community agencies in understanding the Education Code and regulations that govern health care services in schools. A representative committee is working to complete this update. Additionally, the Procedural Safeguards and Referral Service Unit at the SED provides resources and guidance on physical health care services for pupils. Call 800/926-0648 for assistance.

education forces, she also urges those representing special education interests to broaden their perspectives on staff development, training, and collaboration to include general education staff on all levels.

Through their commitment, and despite historical obstacles to IDEA’s full realization, the Atchisons have narrowed a gap between worlds that once viewed each other with little notion of common advantage. The energy and commitment they bring to their partnership constitutes a model we may look to in our efforts to educate all children well.

Making Varied Voices Heard

California’s Advisory Commission on Special Education (ACSE)

By LOEB ARONIN, ACSE CHAIR

What effect will new state and federal legislation have on programs for students with disabilities? What rights do students in special education programs have to participate in graduation activities? What special education services must be provided to eligible students in Youth Authority facilities? How can the State of California resolve the shortage of qualified special education teachers? What accommodations must be provided to students with disabilities so that they may participate in the State Assessment Program? What rights and supports can parents of children with disabilities expect from their public schools? These are only a sample of the kinds of questions addressed by the Advisory Commission on Special Education.

This group of parents, administrators, educators, legislators, and various other stakeholders meet monthly to make informed recommendations on special education issues to the State Board of Education, to the Superintendent of Public Instruction, to California’s legislators, and to the governor of the state.

Federal and state law require the existence of this commission as part of a concerted effort to support those individuals and groups that make decisions affecting special education students, parents, teachers, and schools. The Commission has three openings for new members and encourages ethnically diverse individuals, parents, and individuals with disabilities to apply. Anyone interested in serving should contact ACSE’s secretary at the address below and request a New Member Inquiry Packet. Individuals interested in making public statements or presentations before the Commission can also learn about those procedures through the same contact.

Yolanda Starr, ACSE Secretary
515 “L” Street, Room 270, Sacramento, CA 95814
Phone: 916/445-4603 • Fax: 916/327-3706 • E-mail: ystarr@cde.ca.gov

R E S O U R C E S

ON-LINE RESOURCES

<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/Compact/>
The U.S. Department of Education offers free *A Compact for Learning An Action Handbook for Family-School-Community Partnerships*. This publication clarifies what families and schools can do together to help students meet high standards.

<http://ericir.syr.edu/>
The Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) makes available the publication *Strong Families, Strong Schools: Building Partnerships for Learning* created by the U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C. (1994). This thirty-year research report documents the importance of parental involvement in education. Available as ERIC No. ED371909 through ERIC's Website or by calling the CDE Press, California Department of Education, at 800/995-4099.

<http://www.fape.org>
Families and Advocates Partnership for Education informs and educates families and advocates on promising practices and legislative issues generated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). It also identifies parents, community business partners, and community organizations that are using successful strategies to implement IDEA.

<http://www.idea practices.org>
IDEA Practices provides information about IDEA '97, with links to partnership projects funded by the U.S. Department of Education. These projects demonstrate collaboration on national, state, and local levels.

<http://www.ncrel.org/catalog/>
The North Central Regional Educational Laboratory offers on its Website, free of charge, *Professional Development: Learning from the Best*, a step-by-step guide/toolkit featuring best practices to help schools and districts implement sustainable professional developments. Based on the experiences of the U.S. Department of Education's National Awards Program for Model Professional Development award-winning sites, the publication addresses issues of designing, implementing, evaluating, and sharing professional development. Print copies may also be ordered free of charge by calling 800/356-2735.

On-line Resources continued, next column

CDE PUBLICATIONS

All CDE publications are available by calling the CDE Press, California Department of Education, at 800/995-4099.

California Strategic Plan for Parental Involvement in Education (1992, 52 pp., \$6.50, item number 1036). This document outlines the importance of parental support and participation in the home, community, and school; it posits the direct and positive effect of this participation on the educational performance of children.

Family Literacy: Building a Partnership among Families, Communities, and Educators (1994, 54 pp., \$13.38 plus postage, ERIC number ED385169). This publication offers a program design for literacy, examples of model projects in California, various book reviews, and an interview with sociolinguist Joshua A. Fishman. Available through the Educational Resources Information Center at <http://ericir.syr.edu/>

On-line Resources... continued

<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/parents/pfie.html>
Partnership for Family Involvement in Education, in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Education, offers a free, on-line resource, *Reaching All Families: Creating Family-Friendly Schools*, a booklet that aids school staff in communicating with parents. Topics include home activities that assist learning and strategies for reaching parents with limited-English proficiency.

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/spbranch/sed/susex.pdf>
Suspension/Expulsion Handbook. This on-line handbook, created by the Association of California School Administrators, offers practical suggestions for developing administrative district procedures for disciplining students with disabilities.

<http://www.wested.org>
WestED, a research, development, and service agency, offers a Website that targets a variety of topics, from early childhood intervention to school-to-work transition services. One of its aims is to help individuals form partnerships by providing tools for productive consensus-building, particularly in instances of scarce resources.

RiSE LIBRARY RESOURCES

The Resources in Special Education (RiSE) Library is now located at Parents Helping Parents (PHP), a Parent Training and Information Center (PTI) in Santa Clara, California. Phone: 408/727-5775, ext. 110. What follows is a brief list of its available holdings on collaboration. Contact the library for more complete listings.

Documentation of a Collaborative Transition Planning by Denise Landriau (ETC: Sacramento, CA, 1988; call #0806; 180 pp.). This collection of materials from meetings of the Alameda County Collaborative Transition Planning System focuses on interagency cooperation.

The File Drawer: A Resource for Consultants to Community Collaborative Groups (Special Education Resource Network, Infant Preschool: Sacramento, CA, 1987; call # 7117 or 7362; 300 pp.). This publication offers a collection of resources for consultants who work with community collaborative groups. Covers training issues, examples, strategies, and sample materials useful for the process of forming and implementing a collaboration.

A Guidebook to Local Interagency Collaboration (California State Office of Special Education, 1982; call # 20163; 300 pp.). This resource guidebook is designed for "developers of local interagency collaborations among agencies that serve handicapped children and youth in California." It includes state-level agreements and steps to take. Additionally, it includes numerous useful resources.

Thinking Collaboratively: Ten Questions and Answers to Help Policy Makers Improve Children's Services, by Charles Bruner (Education and Human Services Consortium: Washington, D.C., 1991; Call # 21866 or 4991; 31 pp.). This document offers a question-and-answer format to help state and local policymakers consider how to foster local collaboration to benefit children and families. Checklists are provided to help assess key issues in establishing interagency initiatives, demonstration projects, and statewide reforms to foster collaboration.

APRIL 4

Home-School-Community: Partnerships for the New Millennium Conference. Sponsored by the California Association for Bilingual Education, Region V. For administrators, principals, parents, and teachers; topics include educational policy, bilingual education, literacy, and reading instruction. Ventura, CA. Contact Sara Esposito by phone at 213/532-3850 or 213/532-3860; or by e-mail: sara@bilingualeducation.org

APRIL 30–MAY 3

National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) Annual Conference on Leadership and Change. For administrators, principals, educational agencies, university and college faculty, policymakers; topics include disabilities, educational administration, and special education. Alexandria, VA. Contact Nancy Tucker by phone at 703/519-3800, ext. 326 or 703/519-3808; or by e-mail: nancy@nasdse.org

MAY 4–7

Pioneer Spirit—Blazing New Trails. International Parent-to-Parent conference sponsored by the Nevada Partners in Policymaking. For parents, educators, and trainers; topics include family-professional relationships and partnerships, community resources and more. Reno, NV. Contact Cheryl Dinnell by phone at 775/784-4921, ext. 2352; or by e-mail: Cdinnell@scs.unr.edu

MAY 8–10

Special Education and the California Reading Initiative (see article, page 11). San Diego, CA. Contact Rebecka Anderson by phone at 707/206-0533, ext. 104; or by e-mail: rebecka.anderson@calstat.org

MAY 12–13

UCLMRI 2000 Annual Conference sponsored by the University of California Linguistic Minority Research Institute. For teachers, administrators, and education consultants; topics include challenges of teaching English learners, school reform, new curriculum standards, and more. Irvine, CA. Contact by phone at 805/ 893-2250; or by e-mail: lmri@lmrinet.ucsb.edu

JUNE 19–22

The Collaborative Challenge: Unifying General and Special Education (see article, page 11). Palm Springs, CA. Contact Rebecka Anderson by phone at 707/206-0533, ext. 104; or by e-mail: rebecka.anderson@calstat.org

AUGUST 8–10

Spotlight on Accountability: From Policy to Partnerships. State Superintendents' symposium, sponsored by California Department of Education's *School's In 2000*. For teachers, policymakers, school board members, and administrators; topics include accountability and effective practices. Sacramento, CA. Contact Natalie Vice by phone at 916/323-8353; or e-mail: nvice@cde.ca.gov

OCTOBER 5–6

Inclusive Communities—The Journey of Dreams conference sponsored by the Supported Life Institute. For professionals, educators, families, and individuals with disabilities; topics include the future of people with disabilities as they are included as valued community members. Sacramento, CA. Contact Andy Faletti by phone at 916/ 263-1153; or by e-mail: SLI@supportedlife.org

Monitoring... *continued from page 3*

press are contributing to an invigorated sense of belonging and ownership throughout the district on the part of its constituency that before now had little or no direct connection with the schools. Mr. Agundez is convinced that good things are happening because of that shared time together at the Seminar, where people were given the opportunity to remember and recommit to their goals and to each other. "If only we had this kind of time on the front line," he mused, wishing all district staff and involved parents could benefit from the Seminar experience. But he was optimistic that the district's team could effectively share the renewed energies.

In the large picture, Greenfield, Brawley, and Palo Verde are just beginning their Focused Monitoring review process. But if their finish is worthy of the start, it promises to be an exciting and fruitful venture.

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FAMILIES IN ACTION: PARENT TRAINING AND INFORMATION CENTERS

By CLAUDIA LOOMIS

When families are faced with the logistics of securing special education services for their children, they can become overwhelmed by administrative procedures and may lose sight of their own unique role in their children's education. Given the complexity of today's education issues and the complicated, relevant legislation, parents have often felt powerless to effectively support their children's educational welfare.

The isolation and frustration experienced by parents of students with disabilities has encouraged the widespread conception and growth of support groups, such as Parent Training and Information Centers (PTIs). Federally funded through IDEA '97 (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act), PTIs evolved for several reasons: to enable parents to better understand their child's disability; to help parents achieve a clearer understanding of the special education system; to assist parents in becoming part of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process; to aid the special education system in addressing the individual needs of every student; and to promote a spirit of collaboration between families and education agencies.

How do parents find out about PTIs? Although sometimes directed by a professional or school referral, families that most need them often are left to stumble across these links, wasting precious time and energy.

This last scenario was especially prevalent in earlier decades, when guidance was almost nonexistent for families of children with disabilities and, further, when persons with disabilities had no rights within the education system. Joan Kilburn vividly recalls the shock she felt at the sole "options"—institutionalization or staying at home—available to her daughter Molly, born in 1961 with mental retardation. But change was forthcoming. Around the same time, the Kennedy administration's President's Panel on Mental Retardation helped persons with disabilities find their "national voice."

Change was simultaneously occurring on other levels. In Joan's words, it "happened because there were some parents who said our children deserve a better life. There were some people with disabilities who would not be quietly put away. There were some professionals who could not abide continuing to administer the mistreatment and waste of human lives."

A resident of Marin County, California, Joan joined a local group of parents of children with disabilities (now known as the Marin Association for Retarded Citizens or MARC), who were responsible in the early 1960s for creating the first kindergarten program for children with Down Syndrome, and who were among the first to address the sensitive issue of legislation for individuals with special needs. Joan looks back on this period as the beginning of her "long journey of advocacy and collaboration."

While she lost her own daughter, Molly, some years ago, Joan feels privileged to have witnessed the early success won by partnerships that started with two or three individuals conducting operations out of private living rooms. Joan recounts the group's first summer camp around 1968, which was attended by a twenty-four-year-old man with developmental delay, who had never been separated from his parents. Not only did he have a great time at camp, his parents were able to enjoy a vacation alone and become reacquainted with each other. According to Joan's succinct appraisal, the "idea of respite was born in Marin County."

As Joan readily admits, the going was not always easy. She and others learned quickly that they would have to sustain the organization through fund raising and by becoming effective political activists, capitalizing on the civil rights movement unfolding around them.

Joan has seen PTIs achieve significant benefits for children with disabilities and their families. Instrumental in the 1960s and 1970s in helping to craft special education legislation and develop programs, parent organizations proliferated and rallied in the 1980s to also involve families in needs assessments and service delivery. Retired in 1994 but still an active, supporting member, Joan founded the Matrix Parent Network and Resource Center in 1983. Based in Marin County, Matrix responds to an ongoing need for parent advocacy and involvement.

Under IDEA '97, all students, including those with disabilities, are guaranteed a free and appropriate public education (FAPE), within the least restrictive environment (LRE). Schools are required to comply with this federally mandated program. But realistically,

parents, educators, and administrators sometimes disagree on what may be "appropriate" for any single child. While Joan concedes that conscientious educators and administrators can certainly be strong advocates for students, she also recognizes that efforts to comply with IDEA '97 can be expensive; she understands any reluctance to strain an already financially overburdened system of education. Because parents know their children's needs in a way others cannot, Joan urges them to advocate for their children as strongly as possible by making use of the collaborative resources available to them.

"It's getting parents to the 'table,' alongside educators and administrators, where decisions and policies are being developed," Joan insists. "That's what counts. And that's where partnership organizations can be invaluable." Additionally, she notes the importance of open-minded attitudes prevailing around the "table," especially in light of "angst over changes on all fronts"—on the part of administrators who must implement the changes on school and district levels, educators who must incorporate them in their classrooms, and parents who view them in terms of their children's welfare.

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